

Transportation Research Guide

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LeValley, N. (1992 Summer). **The road to somewhere....** *The Quarterly*, 4-7.

Swan, F. H. (2004 Summer). **South Pasadena Santa Fe Railway Station.** *The Quarterly*, 62-65.

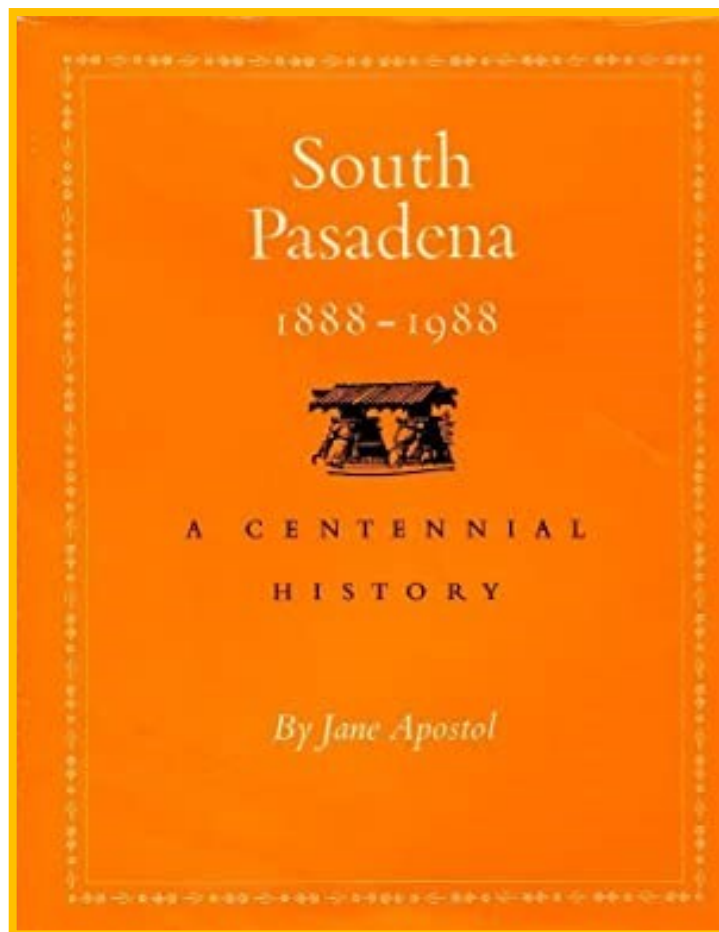


Santa Fe 3444, San Bernardino-to-LA at South Pasadena Station, dated 1950



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South Pasadena: A Centennial
History: 1888-1988, second edition
by Jane Apostol



WEBSITE LINKS

Metro

Metro. (2019). Los Angeles County Metro. <https://www.metro.net/about/about-metro/>

Transportation

Transportation. (n.d.). City of South Pasadena. <https://www.southpasadenaca.gov/government/departments/management-services/transportation>



Horsecar Heading West on Columbia Avenue, dated 1890



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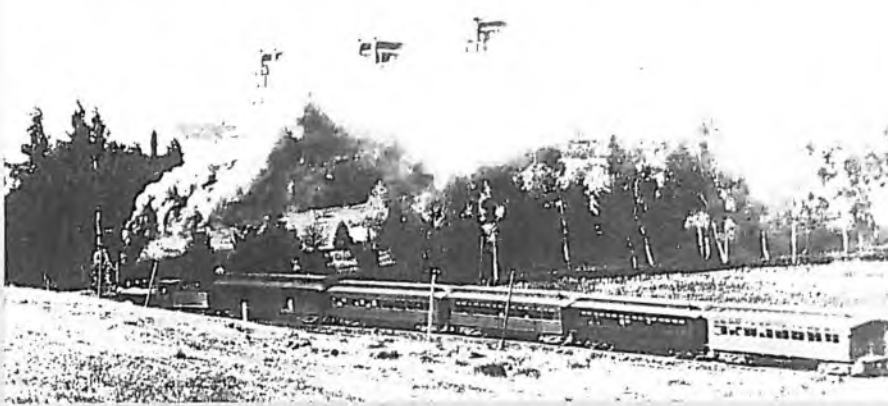
CONTACT INFORMATION

E-mail: localhistory@southpasadenaca.gov

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The Road To Somewhere...



EARLY SOUTH PASADENA--At the turn of the century, the Raymond Hotel, atop Raymond Hill, attracted wealthy visitors from the East to South Pasadena for the three winter months. Once in California, visitors often chose to stay.

by NORMA LeVALLEY

Despite being a landlocked city, nestled amongst the 27 other cities making up Los Angeles County, through the years South Pasadena has invariably been located on the Road to Somewhere

From crude Gabrielino Indian artifacts found along the Indian trail now called Monterey Road, to the route traced by the missionary padres as they went from the San Gabriel Mission northward to the other established missions, the area encompassed by South Pasadena has continued to be a major transportation route.

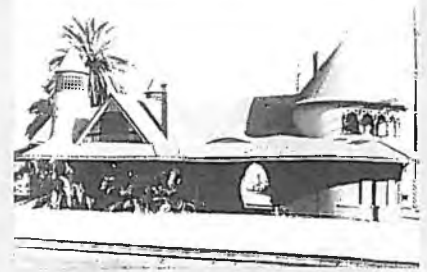
First Railway

In 1885, the first steam railway

through South Pasadena, called the Los Angeles San Gabriel Valley Railroad Company, was to have gone from downtown Los Angeles to South Pasadena's Raymond Hotel, but Pasadena protested so much, it was continued on to Colorado Blvd. and later on to Mud Springs, now known as San Dimas.

The L.A. SGV Railroad became the Santa Fe in 1887 after a brief time as the Southern California Railroad. Three trains ran daily, causing South Pasadena's business district to spring up around the Santa Fe station, located on Meridian Avenue just south of the current Meridian Iron Works Museum.

The second railroad in town was



Raymond Train Station



Intersection looking north on Fair Oaks from Huntington Drive.

the Los Angeles Terminal Railroad which, 10 years later, became the Salt Lake Railroad and traveled from Pasadena to Long Beach in 1891. A court case was instigated because the franchise said the fare was not to exceed 30 cents. The company was losing money and raised the fare to 35 cents. The city sued and the ordinance was upheld by lower courts, but, in South Pasadena's first major legal battle, the decision was reversed four years later by the California Supreme Court.

The third railroad, the Southern Pacific, ran in back of the current Middle School and just west of Garfield Park. The Southern Pacific was formed when Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, Charles Crocker and Collis Huntington bought five railroads and consolidated them.

Competitor Santa Fe had been only allowed westward to Needles, California, but finally got the 'right of way' to continue to Los Angeles and through South Pasadena.

The Union Pacific purchased the L.A. Terminal line. Early a passenger carrier, then later primarily



ANYONE WANT A RIDE? -- Handmade dirigible cruised over South Pasadena at \$25 a half-hour. Dirigible was made by Roy Knabeshue at his plant on the other side of Raymond Hill.

Right Here...Right Now!

freight, it crossed the York trestle and went along the edge of the Arroyo to the south edge of the current Pasadena Freeway, along the middle of Grevelia and crossed over Fremont at the existing bridge.

With railroad magnates using devious methods to force each other out of the business, railroad fares became highly competitive. The fare from Kansas City, initially priced at \$100 one way, during one price war, came down to \$1 for the trip, then back up to \$25 and remained there.

With the two Santa Fe stations, one at Meridian and one at the bottom of Raymond Hill, the route was said to have made the city increase in population six times in two years.

The Raymond Station was one of the liveliest spots in town from December through April when wealthy Easterners came out to stay at the Raymond Hotel.

'Coyote Special'

One of the colorful stories of the Santa Fe was back on July 8, 1905, when Death Valley Scotty (of Scotty's Castle fame) walked into the L.A. station and said he wanted to make a trip to Chicago faster than anyone else had ever made. He plunked down \$5,500 in gold coins from his jeans for a special private train. The next day, the 2265 mile train trip began.

The "Coyote Special" arrived in Chicago 44 hours and 54 minutes later, taking 13 hours off previous records. Champagne bottles were said to have been strewn all along the way.

Another story concerned the Santa Fe and the Raymond Station. At the first Rose Bowl football game in 1902, when Michigan defeated Stanford 49 - 0, the Michigan football team was elegantly housed at

South Pasadena's Raymond hotel.

After the game, they were lined up at the Raymond Station waiting to head back to Michigan. The Raymond Station agent forgot to wire ahead and notify the train to stop at that location so the train whizzed by the gawking football players. The telegraph operator was fired on the spot and the players were rushed to the Pasadena station.

Also in the area of the Raymond Hotel was the Dobbin's Bikeway, financed by Horace Dobbins, president of the Valley Hunt Club. It was supposed to go from the Castle Green in Pasadena to Los Angeles. Money ran out by the time it reached South Pasadena and by then the first automobiles were becoming affordable. By 1917, a municipal electric railway had been granted the use of Dobbin's right of way.

'Steerable' Balloons

Another unique form of South Pasadena's transportation was Roy Knabenshue's homemade dirigibles or "steerable" balloons. His dirigible shop was close to the Raymond

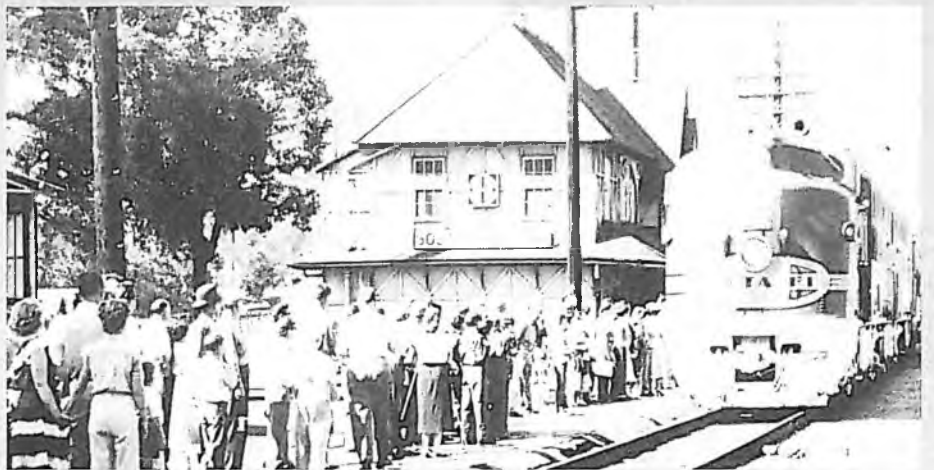
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INSIDE SOUTH PASADENA DEPOT--Joe Lawrence at work in depot next to Meridian Iron Works.



LOCAL DEPOT--Station was demolished in 1950's.



SANTA FE DEPOT--Many old movies used depot as location. Mary Pickford's movie 'Pollyanna' was filmed at the depot and on Oak Street. Preservationists wanted to move the old station to Garfield Park, but lack of funds led to its destruction. Should light rail through South Pasadena become a reality, a replica of the station may be possible. 5

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Road

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Station and rides would be purchased for \$25 a half hour in his 13 passenger dirigible.

Knabenshue was so proud of his sky balloon that he challenged a friend to a race in 1904. His friend, M.T. Hancock, drove a Pope-Toledo automobile and they both started at the same time. The race was from Main and Washington in downtown L.A. to the Raymond Hotel grounds. The dirigible won by just a few minutes.

Mention "Big Red" to old-timers and a dazed look comes into their eyes as they remember the Pacific Electric which modestly called itself "The World's Greatest Electric System." Local residents rode Henry E. Huntington's "Big Red Cars" to work downtown, back and forth to the South Pasadena/San Marino High School and to the beach or mountains. They waited at the still-standing waiting stations by the War Memorial Building and at Raymond Hill.

Arroyo Seco Parkway
The next proposed transporta-



Looking south on Fair Oaks.



Red Car at Mission and Fair Oaks.

tion solution was the Arroyo Seco Parkway, now called the Pasadena Freeway. Plans were approved in 1934 by both the Pasadena and South Pasadena City Councils. It was a heated issue with a 3 - 2 vote for



MEMORABILIA--Retired police officer Jack Gillette displays some of his old train collectibles.

approval by South Pasadena. The actual route of where it was to go was allegedly kept a secret.

Ground breaking took place in 1938, with the speedway opening in 1940. The night before, Indian Chiefs camped overnight in the Arroyo and smoked a peace pipe with the State Director of Public Works relinquishing "all Indian rights to the Arroyo."

'No on 710'

With the opening of the Pasadena Freeway, the original Route 66 going down Fair Oaks and then turning right onto Mission, was bypassed and the Alternate Route 66 on Colorado over the Arroyo was

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Road

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adopted.

At the present time and for the last 30 years, the biggest city-wide concern of residents is whether the 710 Freeway extension through South Pasadena will be forced on the town. Alternate route supporters and "No-Builds" want to keep the city intact without another freeway "going through the heart of the

city." Eight lanes plus train rails are excessive and are said to be obsolete by the time they could be built.

Proponents of "light rail" look to that as the possible solution.

Right from its inception, South Pasadena has been a city "On the Road to Somewhere...." Residents are tired of their homes and land being confiscated to provide a passageway to other communities.

They feel their "Road to Somewhere" is right here, right now.



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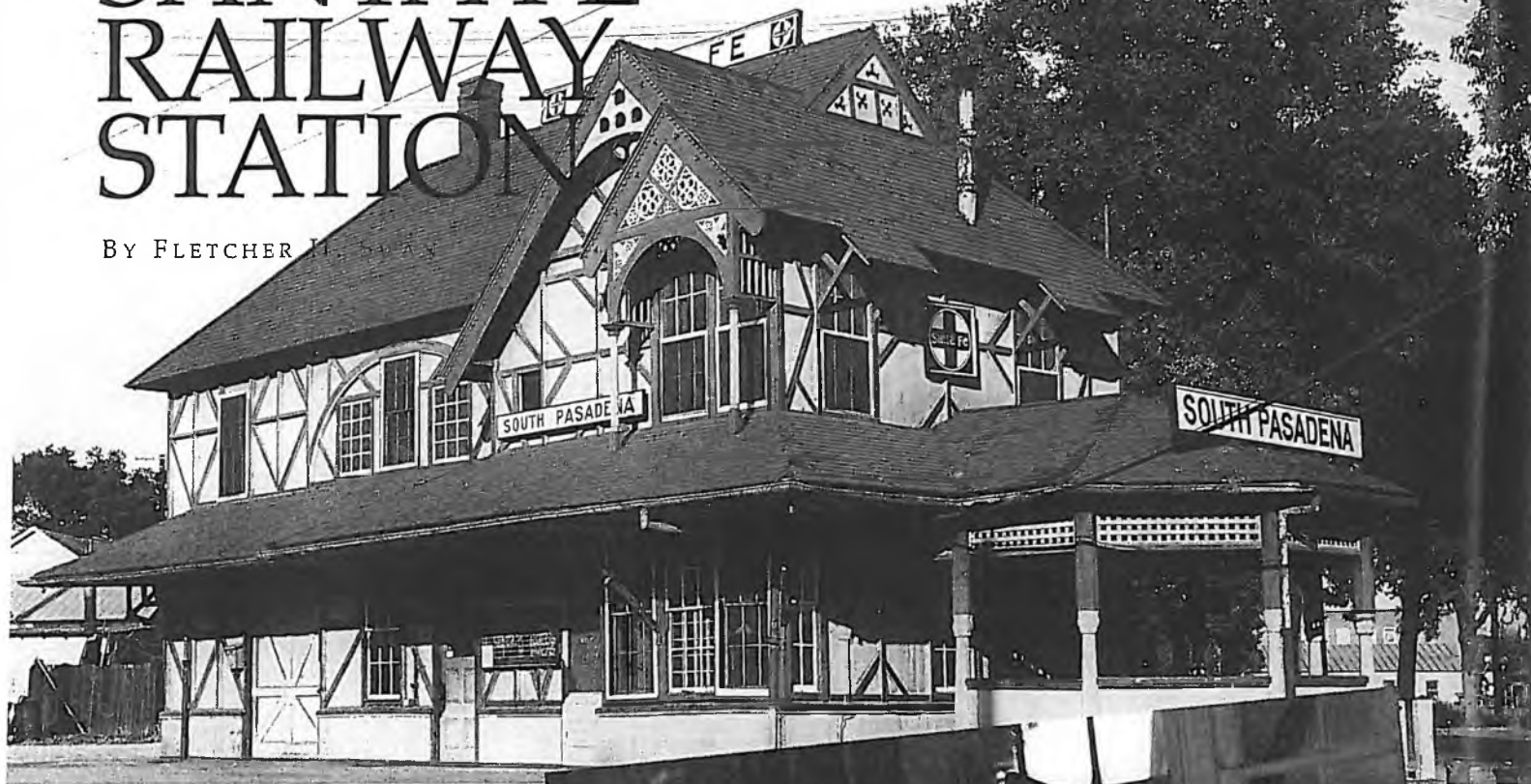
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SOUTH PASADENA SANTA FE RAILWAY STATION

BY FLETCHER H. BROWN



Much interest has been shown regarding the life of the historic Santa Fe Station after a scale model surfaced, which is now on display at the South Pasadena Historical Museum. Bert Peterson, a local businessman who operated a hardware store, built the model during the early 1950s. The model has been owned by several people over the years, the last being John Daniel of South Pasadena, who donated it to the Historical Museum.

The original station was built in 1886 by the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railway at a cost of just over \$1,000, using a combination of Eastlake and Queen Anne architecture. When built, the station was located close to Meridian Avenue and Center Street (later renamed El Centro).

In 1895 after the Santa Fe acquired the railroad, the rail line was straightened and the station relocated north of the crossing at Center Street and Glendon Way. At that time an addition to the station



HARRY MAXFIELD WAS AN AGENT AT THE SOUTH PASADENA STATION FOR OVER 20 YEARS.

was made and some remodeling occurred.

More remodeling took place in 1900. Most stations built during the late 1800's and early 1900's had living quarters for the agent and his family, as agents were subject to call

24 hours a day.

Following the realignment of the rail line and the station relocation, the area of Mission Street-Meridian Avenue-El Centro Street became the hub of the city. In that area was the city's first bank, a hotel, school, post office, library, city offices, grocery, library, watering trough and a number of small businesses.

The station agent was one of the



best known people in town. He sold passenger train tickets, handled freight shipments, sent and received Western Union telegrams (sometimes personally delivering them), and took care of the Railway Express Agency business as well.

Whether he was known as the agent, operator or telegrapher, he did everything. He was highly respected and constantly in touch with the public. Since the agent was required to use Morse Code, he usually became the first and best-

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informed person in town.

In most railroad stations was a Seth Thomas pendulum clock on the waiting room wall but the one in South Pasadena's station was conspicuous by its absence. In place of the wall clock was a 21 jewel Hamilton pocket watch at the end of a chain in the vest pocket of the station agent. If you wanted to know the time, ask!

Over the years, a number of movies were filmed at the station,

using trains for arrival and departure scenes. During the movie making, the film company commissary department set up facilities in the area behind the station to feed movie as well as railroad personnel. Mary Pickford and Charles Laughton were two of the stars who were filmed at the station.

Around 1895, the first station agent of record in South Pasadena was Aaron McReynolds. He was also the town's first druggist and

grocery man, but his store business grew too fast and he was not able to look after railroad business, so his wife took over as agent for several years. Two of their children were born in the living quarters over the station. Later, the railroad discontinued having the agents reside at the station. At South Pasadena, the living quarters remained empty from 1920 until the station was demolished.

The longest serving agent at South Pasadena was Harry P. Maxfield. He came to the station in 1920 and served for 21 years. He was a kind, soft-spoken, friendly and accommodating person, well-known and respected throughout the community. He retired April 1, 1941 at the age of 74 after 38 years with the Santa Fe Railroad. He started his railroad career on an eastern railroad and, at the time of his retirement, had 55 years of railroading.

Usually a very busy place, the ground floor was the business portion of the station. One entered the waiting room to find wood floors and a large potbellied stove just inside the door. The ticket and Railway Express window was a cage-like affair from counter to ceiling. On the counter behind the cage was a scale used to weigh express packages. There were also several desks and a large safe which housed unused tickets and what cash might be on hand.

The Waiting Room consisted of a bench and several chairs. On the wall behind the bench was a brochure rack which was usually empty and posters advertising rail travel.

At the south end, facing the tracks, was all the telegraph equipment, the dispatcher's phone as well as the "company" phone. At the far north end, was the baggage room, accessible from the outside as well as through the ticket office. The baggage room usually housed a large baggage wagon, a large scale for heavy freight items and station record storage.


Access to the second floor living quarters was a stairway from the rear of the station. The area was

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approximately 774 square feet, and contained a living room, dining room, kitchen, two small bedrooms and a bathroom. Wood/coal burning stoves were used for cooking and heating. Indoor toilet facilities were added during one of the many remodeling projects.

During the 1930s and 1940s, it was not unusual that eastbound lane trains would stop at South Pasadena and pick up passengers, depending on their destination. Such trains as the California Limited, the Scout, the Navajo and Grand Canyon Limited would stop for passengers. The San Bernardino "local," handling U.S. Mail and Railway Express stopped at South Pasadena on a daily basis. Incoming mail bags often missed their arm designed to receive the mail and would end up scattered all over Mission Street.

In 1941, the Santa Fe attempted to close the agency in South Pasadena, but protests from the business community and citizens alike prevailed and the California Railroad Commission denied the closure request.

A small station was built near the corner of Meridian Avenue and Mission Street in 1953 and all activities ceased at the old station.

Seeing the handwriting on the wall as to the future of the old station, early in 1954 a group of merchants and citizens formed a committee, called "S-O-S", for Save Our Station. The railroad agreed to give the station to the City with the provision that it be moved. Plans were to raise funds from the community to move the station to Garfield Park for use as a museum. Fund raising efforts failed and demolition began on October 23, 1954 and was completed several days later. The Freight House, located on the west side of the tracks had been demolished several years earlier. The Santa Fe Railroad Agency in South Pasadena officially closed on February 15, 1960.

Before the station was demolished there was much memorabilia inside as well as on the exterior of the structure. The Santa Fe General Manager at that time issued a direc-

tive to the Agent at South Pasadena that Walt Disney was to acquire all of the inside items such as desks, counters, chairs, telegraph equipment, etc. All of the exterior signs, schedule board and other items were to be given to me as I had spent much time at the station during my youth, was a former Santa Fe employee, and was an avid collector of railroad memorabilia.

I was raised in South Pasadena and lived close to the station. I enjoyed train watching and learning the fundamentals of railroading from Agent Harry Maxfield and therefore spent many hours and days in and around the station.

Regardless of how busy he was, he always took the time to make sure that I understood the various facets of railroading. Thanks to his tutelage I was well-prepared when I went to work for the Santa Fe Railroad in 1942 at the age of 19.

The old station is long gone - vivid memories remain. ♣

Mr. Swan was brought up in South Pasadena and was mayor from 1974 to 1976. He was owner of Swan's Stationery Store on Fair Oaks Avenue, where Lucha's Shoe Store now stands. Mr. Swan now lives in Las Vegas but comes back to South Pasadena for frequent visits.

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